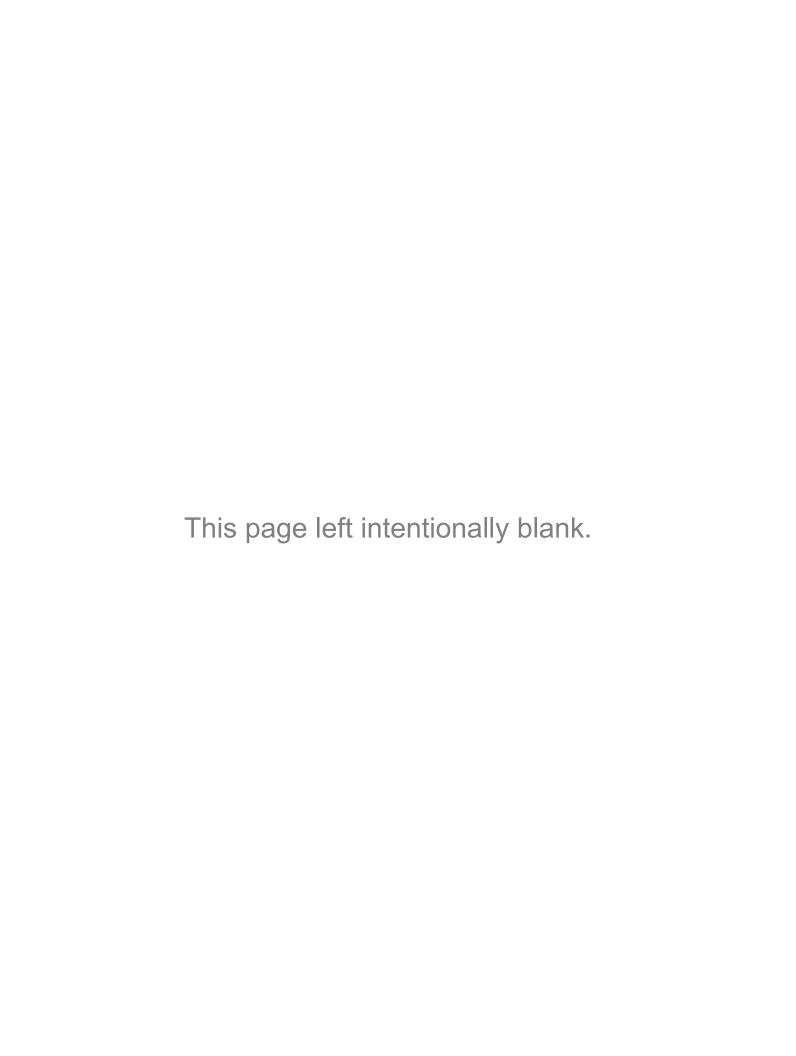# Independent Midterm Evaluation of the Combating Child Trafficking Through Education in Benin Project: Education First

Catholic Relief Services
Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-3-0062

2006

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Independent Midterm Evaluation of the Combating Child Trafficking Through Education in Benin Project: Education First
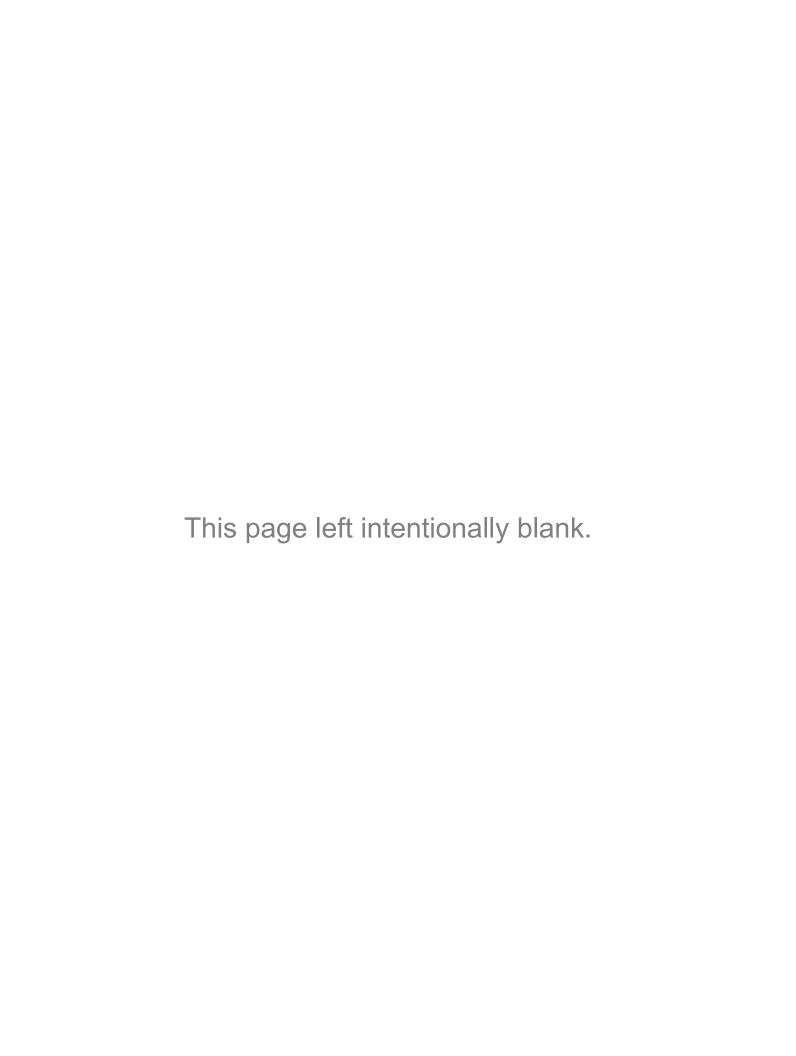
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

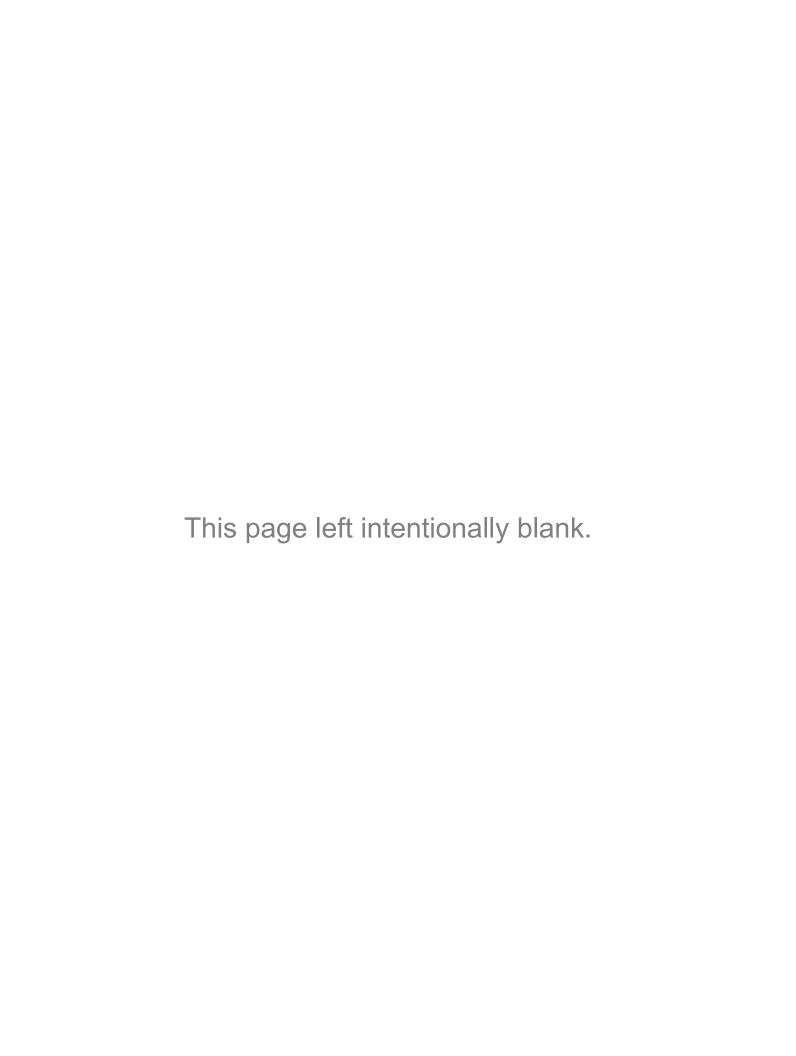|	
AME	Mothers' Associations
APE	*Association de Parents d'Elèves*
CPM	Community Program Manager
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
EFP	Education First Project
EI	Education Initiative
EPCC	Education and Protection Coordination Committees
GTI	*Groupe de Travail Informel*
ICLP	International Child Labor Program
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
MFPSS	Ministry of Family, Social Protection, and Solidarity
NFE	Nonformal Education
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PEC	*Pièce d'Etat Civil*
TdH	*Terre des Hommes*
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WE	World Education
WFP	World Food Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

Education First: Combating Child Trafficking Through Education in Benin project, or the Education First Project (EFP), is implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), with the assistance through sub-agreements of two international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), *Terre des Hommes* (TdH), and World Education (WE). EFP is financed by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) through a grant to CRS and managed by ILAB's International Child Labor Program (ICLP). EFP's goal is to combat child trafficking by improving educational opportunities for vulnerable children in three regions in Benin (Zou, Borgou, Alibori), targeting 100 communities in these regions. The project also supports the Catholic Church's Caritas Centers and TdH's Oasis Center. The Caritas Centers receive victim and at-risk children and provide vocational training over a three- to four-year period. The Oasis Center is a transit center that receives victim children, provides initial training and counseling, and prepares the children's return home.

The project activities are divided into four categories, including (1) awareness raising, (2) improved access to education, (3) institutional strengthening, and (4) sustainability. The awareness raising about child trafficking takes place through cooperation with local radio stations and discussion groups organized in the target communities. Paralegal volunteers organized by the parish are responsible for conducting the awareness raising sessions. A facilitator, paid by EFP, also helps the local Association de Parents d'Elèves (APE)[1] set up EFP-sponsored micro projects in the target communities (e.g., for school infrastructure, school canteens, school supplies, and birth certificates). The facilitator also trains APEs in different issues related to school management. APEs, with the assistance of facilitators, identify local victim and at-risk children, making a list of these children who will receive particular attention to ensure their continuous schooling.

A number of local NGOs were associated with EFP during the project's first two years. This cooperation was discontinued and the project opted to work directly with community facilitators for implementation of community activities. The project's main intervention is at a decentralized level, coordinating activities between local actors involved in the fight against child trafficking (e.g., defense, police, judiciary institutions, APEs, Caritas Centers, and Oasis Center). EFP also created an NGO working group, the *Groupe de Travail Informel* (GTI), to work on policy issues with central government agencies.

Evaluation Methodology

As a part of its implementation cycle, EFP was evaluated at midterm, in April and May 2006. The midterm evaluation incorporated methods related to the evaluative needs of the project's stakeholders, as identified through discussions with local stakeholders and with ICLP. The evaluation was conducted to proactively help improve the project (and its design) and to retroactively judge its merit and worth. An objective-based evaluation approach was also used,

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[1] APE is the African equivalent to the U.S. Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

determining whether the midterm objectives of the project have been achieved. During the evaluation, a mixed approach was used, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, and the fieldwork in Benin was done using a compressed ethnographic research design.

Evaluation Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The project is successfully reducing child trafficking through awareness raising and improved education opportunities. Project activities have led to an increased awareness about the problems of child trafficking and about the benefits of schooling. It has created better learning opportunities, and led to the detection, rehabilitation, reinsertion, and reintegration of victim children and the protection of at-risk children through school structures. The objectives of the project, at midterm, are making good progress, except for the project's targets on nonformal education (NFE). Also, the sustainability and exit strategies of the project need to be further defined to ensure that project activities continue beyond the scope of the project.

The partnership between the three NGOs has been productive, and similar co-implementation arrangements could be duplicated elsewhere. The project's decentralization strategy has led to strong local coordination of activities. GTI's connections with the National Committee for Child Protection and the Ministry of Family, Social Protection, and Solidarity (MFPSS) have contributed to improved awareness and strengthened collaboration at a central level. However, the project's coordination with other central institutions such as the Ministry of Education or the Direction of Literacy and Adult Education (*Direction Nationale de l'Alphabétisation et de l'Education des Adultes* within the *Ministère de la Culture et des Communications*) has been very limited, mainly because the frequent staff turnover in these institutions has complicated the setup of regular work relations.

The main recommendations of the midterm evaluation include the following:

Program design—

- Should be clearly outlined in a project document with realistic objectives in view of financing.

- Should not focus exclusively on the time the children are in school because trafficking often takes place during school holidays.

- Trafficking flows (not only departure zones) should be considered in future projects, so that trafficking routes are not simply changed as a result of project intervention in a departure zone.

Implementation—

- Give attention to the nature of services being provided to direct beneficiaries to avoid giving assistance that may be an incentive for parents to traffic children.

- Increase the number schools or centers offering alternative schooling for out-of-school and unschooled, at-risk and victim children.

- Experiment with establishing school-and-work summer programs that prevent trafficking during the holidays.

- Evaluate the awareness raising messages and strategies, and see if they need to be better adapted to the target groups.[2]

Partnership and coordination—

- Improve communication between USDOL and the project, for example, through regular teleconferences between Washington and key project staff.

- Build communication and/or cooperation with central institutions, in particular with the Ministry of Education and with the Direction of Literacy and Adult Education.

Management and budget—

- Organize a workshop for key project personnel, with the aim to establish a workplan for the final phase of the project (this workshop could also address the issue of establishing an exit strategy for the project).
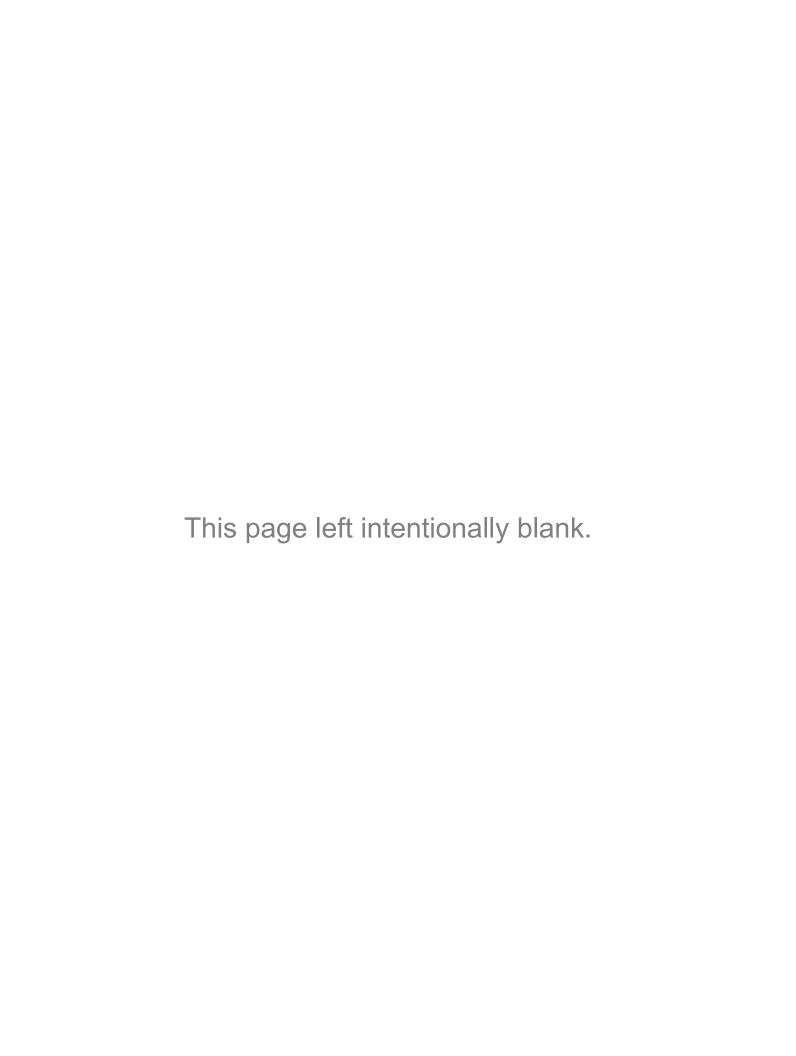
Sustainability—

- Evaluate, and if needed, set up training procedures for new APE members (to make sure that the former members train the new ones).

- Evaluate the possibility, and eventually advocate for, the inclusion of protection of victim and at-risk children into the APE mandate.[3]

- Set up a formal structure for active detection, rehabilitation, and reinsertion/reintegration of victim children.

This project, through an active research agenda and through the implementation of local activities, has gained a good understanding of the problems of child trafficking in Africa, and of how to address them. It is advised to make use of these lessons for future project implementation, in Benin and also internationally.

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[2] Some respondents said that the awareness-raising messages were of a too moralizing nature and may have had limited effect or antagonized people involved in trafficking (including parents). This point raised a great deal of debate during the stakeholder meetings, and this topic should be further investigated.

[3] There was no consensus on this issue among project stakeholders. Some emphasized that the APEs' mandate is exclusively linked to the formal school system, and that they should not be given any expanded role, but could be involved in anti-trafficking coalitions. Some project managers held the opposite view. It is recommended that the project management team further discusses this point.

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I   EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of Child Labor Education Initiative (EI) projects has three main goals, addressing the needs of three different stakeholders—

1. Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved.

2. Assist ICLP to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of EI projects within the broad ICLP technical cooperation framework.

3. Assess the degree to which the objectives relevant to the country-specific situations have been achieved.

The first two goals have been addressed using evaluative methods based on the formative needs of the project's stakeholders. In this context, the evaluative needs have been adapted to proactively help improve the project (and its design) as well as to retroactively judge its effectiveness to reduce child trafficking in a poverty context. The third goal has been addressed using an objective-based approach, determining whether the midterm objectives of the project have been achieved. A mixed-method approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, was used to evaluate all three goals.

To perform this present evaluation, various sources of information have been triangulated to establish validity. These sources included (1) policy and project documents, including project progress reports, (2) fieldwork data, and (3) research documents related to child trafficking in Benin. The analysis of survey data and statistics has made use of descriptive statistical analysis, which aimed to provide an overview of the different outcomes of the project and the costs involved.

The aim of the fieldwork was to describe and analyze EFP from an insider's perspective, in terms of project processes, goals, and impact. It was based on face-to-face, onsite interviews and group discussions. Key informants with special knowledge of the project were consulted. The interviews were based on unstructured and semi-structured questionnaires, and were conducted in an interactive, dialogical manner. The results of the evaluation were further probed and investigated with key informants.

Because of the time constraints of the evaluation, a compressed ethnographic research design[4] was used to develop a "thick description" of the project. Thick description (or emic interpretation) seeks to understand the meaning of people's lives, as they themselves define them.

The interviewees, as well as focus groups and classroom participants can be divided into the following four broad categories: (1) civil servants, (2) project personnel staff, (3) children, and

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[4] A compressed ethnographic design is a modified ethnography that accommodates to shortened time lines and multiple sites.

(4) APE members and parents (see Annex F for a list of interviewees and meetings conducted). The sample was intended to give as broad knowledge as possible of the project. Sampling of interviewees was therefore stratified, trying to cover all categories involved in the project. The selection of communities to visit during the field trip was based on both random and stratified sampling. To gain a more accurate profile of the project, most field visits were not announced in advance. During some visits, the interviews were undertaken with the help of a translator, otherwise the interviews were conducted in French.

The findings of the evaluation were presented in three stakeholder meetings, constructed as member checks and peer debriefing sessions to verify whether the conclusions from data analysis and field work were accurate. The main objective of these meetings was to verify, with the respondent groups, the evaluation recommendations resulting from the data collected and analyzed. The three field meetings included (1) a stakeholders' meeting, involving representatives from all levels of stakeholders (e.g., civil servants, community representatives, project staff), (2) a stakeholders' meeting involving only senior project staff, and (3) a peer debriefing session with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Embassy staff (see Annex A for the presentation of the evaluation made during these meetings, and Annex B for the results of the group work conducted during the first stakeholder meeting). The findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the stakeholder meetings are included throughout the evaluation and constitute an integral part of the findings.

II FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 PROGRAM DESIGN ISSUES

EFP is implemented by CRS as the lead organization and two international NGOs (TdH and WE) together with local NGO participation. The projects goal is to combat child trafficking by improving educational opportunities in three regions in Benin (Zou, Borgou, Alibori). EFP's activities are divided into four categories, including (1) awareness raising, (2) access to education, (3) institutional strengthening, and (4) sustainability. The activities under these categories include awareness raising campaigns, as well as improvement of school opportunities and the set up of systems for protection of victim and at-risk children in 100 communities. EFP also actively participates in local and international initiatives related to child protection and education.[5] The budget provides for personnel and fringe benefits (47 percent of total budget), travel (8 percent), equipment and supplies (12 percent), NGO contracts (10 percent), other (9 percent), and indirect charges (14 percent).[6] The leveraging of funds was considered to be a prerequisite for implementation of certain EFP objectives.

2.1.1 Findings

1. *Does the project design complement existing government efforts to combat trafficking of children and improve the quality of and access to formal and nonformal education (NFE) in the target areas? Did the project's design fill an existing gap in services that other ongoing interventions were not addressing?*

The Benin Government and the MFPSS in particular, largely rely on NGOs to address the problem of child trafficking. The project completes the government's active detection of trafficked children: government agents (police, *gendarmerie*)[7] bring the children to different NGO reception centers (including the EFP-supported Oasis and Caritas Centers), and these centers then take care of the children.

In terms of rehabilitation and reintegration services for trafficked children, the government offers very few services and relies completely on the activities of NGOs. As one respondent stated, "The EFP completes the lack of initiatives by the government."

Several respondents noted that projects combating child trafficking in Benin offer a similar package of services for reintegration of children, and that the originality of the EPF is its use of APEs for protection of trafficked and at-risk children. This project, therefore, fills a gap in

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[5] The initial budget provision for the activities included approximately US$700,000 for the three awareness raising campaigns; US$590,000 for improvement of school opportunities in 100 communities, US$580,000 for the setup of systems for protection of victim and at-risk children in the 100 target communities, and US$130,000 for participation in local and international initiatives related to child protection and education. These numbers refer to the output-by-cost table in the project document, p. 27.

[6] The numbers in percentage-per-budget category refer to the last version of the budget as of June 2005.

[7] The police structure in Benin is divided between the urban *police* (controlled by the Ministry of Interior) and the rural police or gendarmerie (controlled by the Ministry of Defense).

existing services, insomuch as it builds capacity at the APE level to address child trafficking issues.

2. *To what extent has the project's design theory (that child trafficking will be reduced by improving the access to and quality of education in both formal and nonformal education) been proven to date?*

The number of at-risk and victim children monitored by the project who have disappeared or returned to an exploitive situation is lower (estimated at 4 percent) than the overall number of children being trafficked (estimated at 8 to 14 percent). The project design theory can therefore be considered as effective. However, the aforementioned tracking data are not up to date, and because no reliable statistics are available on how large a percentage of at-risk children actually will be trafficked in the high-prevalence areas, it is difficult to calculate the actual effectiveness of the project. Most respondents to this question have noted that the education-based strategy of the project is "sound."

One core partner in the fight against child trafficking (gendarme in a high-prevalence area) noted that, "Maybe the projects somewhat attenuate the problem [of child trafficking] ... but maybe we should also ask ourselves to what extent they also encourage it. By providing assistance to parents of trafficked children, it is as if the projects give them a bonus in addition to the money received through the trafficking of the child. This phenomenon must be taken into account by the project [design]. I have noted such tendency myself." This particularly problem may be the result of a project design flaw that stipulates that victim children are supposed to receive particular attention and assistance. The EFP management is aware of this problem and, in an attempt to overcome it, has provided the majority of its services to benefit the school population as a whole. That is, the project has sought to increase access to education for the entire vulnerable populations instead of providing individual handouts.

3. *What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of the project approach and strategy? Has the project encountered any major obstacles or barriers (cultural or traditional practices, centuries-old migratory patterns, etc.) related to the design, strategy or approach? Are there any critical assumptions that have not been factored into this design?*

According to the project respondents, some of the project approach and strategy's major strengths include the following:

- The use of APEs to set up protection systems and to raise awareness among the local population about schooling and child trafficking

- The use of three NGOs, which complement each other, to implement activities

- The use of the Catholic Church to perform certain services (e.g., awareness raising and assistance to victims and at-risk children through the Caritas Centers).

The project approach and strategy's major weaknesses include the following:

- The insufficient project funds to implement adequate activities in the 100 target villages (e.g., setting up of NFE courses, assisting children to obtain birth certificates,[8] and providing school supplies). The project is dependent on fund-raising activities to realize its objectives.[9]

- The unclear project document does not clearly state which activities will be financed and how they will be implemented.[10]

- Little use of community-based approaches involving such entities as the Chief of Village, Women's Groups, village committees against child combating, and family and clan structures.

- Strong focus on the children's schooling without sufficient control of the children's out-of-school time. According to police, it is during school holidays that most children are trafficked.

- One-sided focus on trafficking departure zones instead of considering the traffic flow. A project combating child trafficking needs to follow the trafficking patterns. There are indications that the trafficking routes in Benin have changed (partly to avoid EFP activities).

Another critical factor that has not been sufficiently integrated into the project design is a risk analysis of the project's ability to raise funds to implement the project's stated objectives.

4. *The targets set at project inception were modified in September 2005 to clearly delineate between direct and indirect beneficiaries. Are all targets now realistic in terms of project achievements to date and target projections for the life of the project?*

The project's target of direct beneficiaries was changed in 2005 from 10,000 (unspecified) children to 6,000 direct beneficiaries (including 1,500 victim children and 4,500 at-risk children),

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[8] Beninese children need a birth certificate or a *Pièce d'Etat Civil* (PEC) to attend exams. Obtaining such a document costs at least 5,000 FCFA (or about US$10), and the Government has recently made the procedures for obtaining these documents more cumbersome for rural people. As a result, many children drop out of primary school because their families cannot afford the additional direct (and opportunity) costs of establishing a PEC. The children who drop out of primary school because their families cannot afford the PEC are at risk of trafficking.

[9] One respondent stated that the main problem was not connected to lack of funds, but to the lack of absorptive capacity at local level, "'Insufficient project funds' have not been a problem. The problem is more one of the local capacity to absorb and use effectively the funds at hand."

[10] Examples of lack of precision: (1) The logframe and activity list indicate that each community will receive a "service." There is no clear definition, however, of a "service." (2) The coordination with local NGOs is underscored as an important feature of the project. It was not clarified how many NGOs the project would cooperate with, how long this cooperation would take place, or what would be the duties of these NGOs. As it turned out, the project first recruited a number of NGOs for two years, after which the cooperation with local NGOs was discontinued and the project opted to work directly with community facilitators. None of this was planned for by the project document.

as well as 8,000 indirect beneficiaries of victim and at-risk children. Most of these children are monitored by EFP through the use of community facilitators and through cooperation with APEs. In addition to these beneficiaries, 578 victims and at-risk children receive direct assistance in the Caritas Centers and 358 victims and at-risk children are currently being assisted by TdH.

The project document does not provide a clear definition of the nature of services the direct beneficiaries will receive. USDOL defines a direct educational service as the provision of goods and/or services (if lack thereof is a barrier to education) that meets the specific needs of the targeted children and result in their enrollment or retention. Examples of goods and services that could be considered a direct service include tutoring, school meals, uniforms, school supplies and materials, books, and tuition.

Most children monitored by EFP do not receive individual services that respond exactly to the definition above. With the assistance from TdH and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a large number of children in this project have received school supplies (e.g., pens and school uniforms). Though most children need such supplies, the provision of this service is not based on an individual analysis of each child's needs and the provision of the direct service that would ensure his or her enrollment and/or retention.

A number of children counted as direct beneficiaries do not receive any other project services than attention from the APEs during schooling.[11] If one assumes that this attention helps the children to continue their schooling (which it does in many cases), it thus constitutes a "direct service." If the interpretation of direct services remains large and encompasses the school-monitoring services by the APEs, then one can consider (as I have done in this evaluation) that project targets are realistic and that they are on track.[12]

The project had as its objective to create NFE classes in 50 percent of the target communities. This target cannot be realized within the time frame and the current budget of the project. It would be realistic to expect a success rate of 20 percent for this target (if the Caritas Centers are counted as a part of the NFE services being offered to the target communities).

2.1.2   Conclusion

The project completes the government's active detection of trafficked children by offering rehabilitation and reintegration for these children. EPF addresses a service gap by working with APEs to protect trafficked and at-risk children. The education-based strategy of the project is sound.

Using the project management's interpretation of the USDOL definition of direct educational services, the targets are realistic and they are on track, except for NFE services.

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[11] This "service" consists of particular attention to the children's attendance to school. It does not include any other assistance ensuring the children's possibility to attend school (e.g., school supplies and help to establish birth certificate).

[12] Conversely, if one does not count the APE monitoring and the TdH/UNICEF provision of school kits as direct services, the target number of beneficiaries is not realistic in terms of achievements, and the number of at-risk children should be revised accordingly (reflecting the number of children receiving direct educational assistance from the Caritas and Oasis Centers).

2.1.3   Recommendations

For new projects, attention should be given to the overall cohesion of the project document to ensure that the project objectives can realistically be implemented within the proposed budget and time frame. The project's objectives and activities should be clearly outlined, in concrete terms. The actual service provision should be estimated in unit costs per direct beneficiary, so as to clarify exactly which services the project will offer (and what it cannot offer). Special attention should be given to the nature of these services to avoid perverse effects of parents trafficking their children to meet the project's criteria and becoming primary beneficiaries (i.e., to avoid parents trafficking their children to receive assistance from projects).

Trafficking flows should be considered, to avoid causing trafficking routes to be changed because of project intervention in a departure zone. The flow-based work would result in direct contact between the project and users of children's services. The policies and terms of such contact must be clearly outlined to avoid that the appearance of the project being tolerant of child trafficking practices.

Finally, the project document should also focus on the time the children are not in school. Police reports indicate that children are relatively safe during the school year and that they tend to be trafficked or leave during the school holidays.[13] It is misguided and less productive to focus most project effort on the time the children are safe, and not to address the time they are most vulnerable (i.e., school holidays).

2.2   PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

The project (1) raises awareness of child trafficking through cooperation with local radio stations and paralegals' work in the target communities; (2) sets up micro projects in the target communities (e.g., school infrastructure, school canteens, school supplies, and birth certificates); (3) provides individual attention to victim and at-risk children to ensure, as needed, rehabilitation, reinsertion, and continuous schooling; and (4) searches for sustainable policies addressing the problem of child trafficking through cooperation between NGOs (through the informal NGO work group, GTI).

2.2.1   Findings

1. *Does the project design seem to be adequately supporting the four EI goals? If not, which ones are not being supported and why not?*

Child Labor Initiative Goal 1: Awareness raising of the importance of education for all children and mobilizing a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructure. This initiative has been supported through (1) the provision of radio awareness-raising programs; (2) awareness raising among APEs and other local actors by facilitators and paralegals; and (3) micro projects set up and co-financed with APEs to strengthen local school infrastructure. Feedback on the awareness-raising programs has been good (e.g., there is regular

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[13] Many children leave voluntarily during the school holidays to work to "prepare for the school year." Some of them do not return.

listener participation on the radio programs). Respondents during the evaluation were aware of the problems of child trafficking and it was clear that the awareness-raising messages have been understood by the different stakeholders.

Child Labor Initiative Goal 2: Strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school. This initiative has been supported through (1) negotiation with local school authorities to accept inscription of children above the normal school age to enter formal schooling programs; (2) following up on schooling of victim and at-risk children through the intervention of APEs to address low performance and/or attendance problems; (3) negotiation and discussions with concerned parties (e.g., micro enterprises, APEs) to place children who are above school age, and who desire it, in NFE and/or in workshops; (4) enrollment of at-risk and victim children in the Caritas Centers; and (5) rehabilitation of victim children in the Oasis Center. These initiatives have led to an increased enrollment of at-risk and victim children.

Child Labor Initiative Goal 3: Strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor. This initiative has been supported by EFP's participation in the NGO working group on child labor issues, GTI. This group was initiated and set up by EFP project members, CRS, and TdH, and specifically advises the government on legal and policy matters relevant to child trafficking. The group had an important role in supporting and advising the government in its establishment of an anti-trafficking law and is currently advising the government on the application decree of the law.

Child Labor Initiative Goal 4: Ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts. This initiative is supported through the targeting of APEs as a major counterpart to the project. Because an APE is a permanent village institution, it is believed that awareness raising and building of capacity at the APE level is sustainable.[14] Though EFP was not asked to submit an exit strategy at the time of project start-up, new management guidelines ask that an exit strategy be submitted by September 2006. This exit strategy is currently under development.

>   2. *At midterm, is the project on track in terms of meeting its stated purpose and outputs in the project document? If not, what seem to be the factors contributing to delays?[15]*

Project Purpose (Logframe Point B): Reduction of Trafficking[16]

At present, according to project statistics, more than 5,000 recovered victims and detected at-risk children within the targeted communities are enrolled in NFE or formal education programs (965 recovered victims and 4,262 at-risk children). School retention targets are on track (the project counts a 4 percent dropout rate among its direct beneficiaries).

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[14] APE members are elected for a period of three years, renewable once. This periodic renewal of the members on the APE committee somewhat reduces the sustainability at this level though the project is striving to maintain an information crossover system from older to new members to improve sustainability.

[15] The revised logframe of the project document (September 8, 2005) has been used to reply to this question.

[16] Project goal: 6,000 recovered victims of child trafficking and detected at-risk children within targeted communities enrolled and persist in NFE or formal education programs (1,500 recovered victims and 4,500 at-risk children).

Of the beneficiaries, 578 recovered victims and at-risk children receive project support in Caritas Centers; 4,671 victims and at-risk children are identified and monitored in the primary public schools through WE's work with APEs; 165 recovered victims are transiting through the Oasis Center; and 193 at-risk children are monitored in the villages through TdH networks.

Quantitatively speaking, the first project objective is on track. However, it should be noted that the support most direct beneficiaries receive from the project is limited to a follow-up on their school attendance.[17] The systems established for this follow-up are also of variable quality. Monitoring is ensured through the APEs and the WE facilitators' management of lists of at-risk and victim children. Respondents in some of the APEs stated that they followed up on the attendance of the children with particular care, although it is uncertain how much they could do to assist each individual child (because no project funding is available for such benefits as school supplies, assistance for establishment of individual birth certificates, and individual assistance for food). Some of the APEs did not have copies of the lists of at-risk and victim children and consequently could not follow up on the children. Members of other APEs did not have a clear view of what they were supposed to do with the lists. One APE had set up a system of fining the families of dropout children 5,000 FCFA to ensure school retention. The project management had not been informed about this system, and would probably not have sanctioned it. Apparently, the system was not very successful, because the families of children who dropped out were too poor to pay the fines. Hence, it would seem that the effectiveness of such system of fining non-compliant families is low.

Because most at-risk children enrolled in Caritas Centers are living in the school, the protection offered by these centers is generally onsite and continuous. Similarly, the follow-up by TdH and the Oasis Center, in view of the smaller number of beneficiaries, is generally of a more holistic nature (i.e., it is not only limited to following up on the school or apprenticeship attendance, but also includes monitoring the children's health and family situation). The children enrolled in Caritas Centers and in the Oasis Center are also provided with school supplies.

The EFP estimates that 9,881 children (8,130 in the Zou; 1,751 in the North) are the indirect beneficiaries of the micro projects established in the villages. Family members of many direct beneficiaries can be counted as indirect beneficiaries, insomuch as awareness-raising and protection actions may be extended to them in the form of increased follow-up from the APE. The number of indirect beneficiaries exceeds targets.[18]

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[17] A typical intervention by an APE would involve: (1) identification of target children based on poverty and trafficking history criteria; (2) in coordination with teachers and parents, ongoing monitoring of the work and schooling status of the target children; and (3) if school attendance problems occur, discussion with parents about how to address those problems.

[18] EFP has included the direct users of the micro projects (e.g., the users of classrooms and school canteens) as direct beneficiaries. The names of these children are included in the school attendance monitoring lists of victim and at-risk children.

Project Output 1: Increased awareness about child trafficking and benefits of schooling[19]

The project has financed radio programs through the cooperation with the Catholic Church's dioceses of Zou and Alibory (in Borgou, the diocese is not directly involved). At the parish level (in the target communities), listening and discussion groups are held by paralegals who are often connected with the Catholic Church.

All the APEs and parents interviewed were aware of the problems caused by child trafficking. The radio programs and discussion groups focus on "the dignity of human life, created in God's image," and warn the population against the "perverse effects of child trafficking." The benefits of education were also emphasized through the radio programs and through group discussions conducted in the villages by the paralegals. Some respondents said that the messages were of a moralizing nature (i.e., that the messages focused too much on the fact that child trafficking is bad, both from a moral and from a religious point of view), which may have had an effect of creating a public opinion against the trafficking amongst those not concerned with trafficking, but which may have had limited effect on people involved in trafficking.[20] The awareness-raising messages used both neutral language, and at times discussed trafficking in a religious context.

Project Output 2: Access to education

Project Output 2.1: Local Education and Protection Coordination Committees improve access to appropriate education programs for recovered trafficked and at-risk children in the targeted communities

Local Education and Protection Coordination Committees (EPCC) have been created in most of the target communities. These committees' main constituent is the local APE.[21] APE/EPCCs have improved access and retention in education programs by monitoring lists of victim and at-risk children. This monitoring was done in coordination with teachers and parents. If school attendance problems occurred, the APEs would discuss how to address those problems with parents and try to resolve the problems. The APEs also established lists of children at school attendance age and followed up with parents to ensure that these children were enrolled. This follow-up improved school access and retention in the target communities.

Project Output 2.2: Existing formal education programs are strengthened in the targeted communities

According to the project's statistics, 90 percent of the primary public schools have received some form of assistance. This assistance includes micro projects (see Output 2.4), TdH/UNICEF school kits, and school canteen assistance funded by USAID and the World Food Program (WFP). At the time of the evaluation, the kits had been received quite recently, so it was not possible to evaluate their effect on school retention.

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[19] Project goal: Three awareness campaigns are held in the targeted communities during the project through radio programs; community level listening and discussion groups are held by the paralegals.
[20] This opinion was not widely shared during the stakeholders' meeting, but merits consideration.
[21] Because most stakeholders used the term APE, this evaluation has generally adapted this terminology instead of using the term EPCC.

Project Output 2.3: NFE projects are strengthened or created within the targeted communities

Two NFE centers have been created in the targeted communities and two are under establishment. These NFE centers have received some support from the project in the form of training of the local APE/EPPCs, and one center received supplies from TdH/UNICEF. These centers enrolled at-risk and trafficked children who would not have been attending primary school, either because of poverty reasons, their age (some were considered too old to be enrolled in primary schooling), or cultural reasons (e.g., the families did not attach much value in girls' education).

At the initial implementation of the project, the 15 Caritas Centers were presented as part of the NFE structures that served the targeted villages. It was only at the beginning of 2005 that the definition of NFE was reduced to literacy and bridge courses. The project progress reports include Caritas Centers and count the actual number of NFE classes when reporting on this target (therefore, 32 classes are counted for Reporting Period 5, covering September 2005 to February 2006). The logframe states that "50 percent of [target] communities have nonformal education programs by end of project." Using the narrower definition, one finds that only 2 percent of the target communities have NFE programs and 2 percent are in the process of setting up such programs. This target is therefore not on track. The target needs to be revised because it is unlikely that 46 NFE programs can be created within the remaining time of the project.

Project Output 2.4: Community projects undertaken to create a more favorable environment for the education of victims of traffic and at-risk children

The formal education programs have been strengthened through the setup of 61 micro projects. Seventy-two percent of the micro projects are related to the improvement or construction of infrastructure, 8 percent are related to the establishment of birth certificates, and 20 percent are related to other activities including the creation of school cantinas, provision of water supply, construction of school furniture, and the setup of local shops selling school supplies. The infrastructure-related micro projects included repairing classrooms, and building new classrooms, hangars or lavatories. EFP supported the infrastructure-related projects with a total financing of 15,641,360 FCFA (2,779,635 FCFA in the North and 12,861,725 in the Zou).[22]

Micro projects helping the children to establish a birth certificate, necessary for attending exams, requires 50 percent financing from the participating children's parents (i.e., the micro project finances 2,500 FCFA of the birth certificate and requires a financial match of 2,500 FCFA). Some of the school cantinas also require counterpart participation, sometimes as much as 35 FCFA from each child, per meal. These costs may contribute to the exclusion of the most vulnerable children in the community from participating in the micro projects related to birth certificates and school cantinas.[23]

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[22] The APEs paid a contribution to complement these costs (their contribution varied between 20–40% of the total costs).
[23] This concern is currently being investigated by WE. Project management staff said they will address any case of exclusion. During the field interviews, most project staff members were of the belief that the required cost participation from the children's families did not exclude at-risk and victim children.

Project Output 3: Institutional Strengthening

Project Output 3.1: Systems for ensuring the education and protection of at-risk children are strengthened or created within the targeted communities

APEs are at the heart of systems created within the communities for the protection and education of at-risk children. This output is quantitatively on track (see comments under Project Purpose—Logframe Point B above). As noted above, the quality of the tracking systems is uneven and the reliability of the monitoring system is questionable.

Project Output 3.2: Systems for protection and education of victims of trafficking are strengthened or created within the target communities

The systems tracking victim children in the project's 100 target communities are similar to the protection systems of at-risk children and mainly consist of following up on school attendance.

Project Output 3.3: An integrated network is developed by the target communities and centers to provide a coordinated response to the challenges of educating and protecting victims of trafficked and at-risk children

The project has set up an informal network connecting project personnel, police/gendarmerie, and juridical institutions for active detection and protection of victim children. Work is under way to formalize this network.

The integration and protection of victim and at-risk children at the community level are addressed through the management of the aforementioned lists.

Project Output 3.4: The services of the Protection and Education Centers that recover victims of trafficking are expanded and improved

The project provides 14,000 FCFA (about US$30) for supplies for each at-risk and victim child in the Caritas Centers. This provision covers less than 30 percent of the needed budget for supplies for the child, leading to marginally better supplies for the children. The centers visited during the evaluation did not have similar levels of supplies and funding, and the attendance of the centers generally reflected their level of funding (the centers that had limited funding were also less popular). All the centers were operating below their capacity (that is they had available space) and at capacity or above capacity (in terms of the funding available).[24]

In addition to the direct funding, the project also organized training sessions for Caritas Center staff, which may have improved the services of the centers insomuch as certain staff members have gained knowledge of child counseling (this training was funded by the project and was a part of TdH's workplan).

The project covers 50 percent of the yearly cost of the Oasis Center. The financing is not targeted at improving any specific service, but enables the center to assist an increased number of victim children.

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[24] Therefore, more funding would have led to better supplies and possibly a higher enrollment. Conversely, lack of EFP funding appears to led to fewer supplies and possibly a lower enrollment.

Project Output 4: The project takes an active role in local, departmental, national, and international initiatives related to the protection and education of children

The project has taken an active role in different policy initiatives related to the protection and education of children, especially through the creation of and participation in the NGO working group on child trafficking, GTI. This role includes organizing and attending GTI meetings, as well as informal follow-up with central authorities (especially with the National Committee for Child Protection) on child trafficking issues. The project has also been able to take an active role in local and regional work on education and trafficking, but has not worked with central Education actors and has had a limited work relationship with the MFPSS. One of the main reasons for the lack of connections with the different ministries is the rapid turnover of ministry staff, making it difficult to preserve a long-term working relationship between the project and the ministries.

EFP has facilitated the research and write up of a number of studies on the situation of trafficking, including a comprehensive baseline study on trafficking in the project's target area, a study on child trafficking and decentralization, and a study of positive deviance (i.e., identifying and isolating specific characteristics of those not involved in child trafficking).

3. *Has the project developed tools and systems to monitor and evaluate project performance? How effective are these tools and systems?*

The project has used software provided by USDOL for monitoring of victim and at-risk children. During our visit, however, the project IT personnel were not able to open the program. They stated that the "software was difficult to use" and that it was used because "it was given to us and it must have been expensive to develop it." Moreover, the software could not be used to generate the child trafficking reports requested by USDOL. It should be noted that during a recent Africa Region Grantees Consultation (April 2006), USDOL indicated that it does not require that the grantees use this software and recommended that they should use the program that best works for them as their data monitoring tool.

The project's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer has developed a new data monitoring system based on Access, which the project uses for follow-up on the children's schooling, and which can be used to generate the reporting tables requested by USDOL. Annex C provides an overview of the data collection tools used by the project.

4. *USDOL considers direct beneficiaries those children that are withdrawn or prevented from exploitive child labor and provided with direct educational services through the project. Has the project been able to accurately collect data on its direct beneficiaries and report on USDOL common indicators (withdrawal, prevention, retention, and completion) thus far?*

The direct beneficiaries in the target communities have been identified as at-risk or victim children by APEs (the project facilitators have helped them to perform this task).[25] Many of the direct beneficiaries have not received any direct educational services through the project other than specific monitoring by project personnel and APEs (which were ensuring that they attended

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[25] Most APEs identified at-risk children as orphans and children from families where siblings have been trafficked.

school by monitoring their school attendance). Many of the direct beneficiaries benefit from the micro projects.

The monitoring lists were not up to date. The lists verified during the evaluation mission contained errors pertaining to the 2005–2006 school year and a few of the lists contained errors dating back to the 2004–2005 school year. These errors consisted mostly of children who were indicated as "present" in a school, but who had (1) graduated, (2) left because of pregnancy or marriage, (3) transited to another school, or (4) abandoned the class for unknown reasons. Project management noted that these lists are updated twice a year for USDOL reports, and that they will be corrected and updated for the next report in September 2006.

Two additional problems were noted: (1) several children claimed that they had changed names and that their name on the list was not valid any more (it was not known whether the children actually change their own names, or whether a child with the original name had abandoned and another tried to take its place in the hope of receiving some benefit from the project); (2) children absent from school for a longer time are not counted as "abandoned" before the beginning of the following school year, when the teacher submits the yearly class report. If APEs are relying on teachers' reports for monitoring of abandons, they may not be able to detect school attendance problems in time to prevent trafficking and/or dropout. During the evaluation, children who were schoolmates to the absent pupil provided the most reliable data. Many teachers and facilitators, knowing the importance of the project's tracking system, were eager to please and to provide "good numbers."

5. *USDOL requires grantees to track the working status of each direct beneficiary. Please assess how the project has been doing this thus far.*

As noted above, the lists were not up to date. APEs stated that they followed up on the status of each present child. Their follow-up, however, is mainly school-related and is therefore only indirectly tracking the working status of the children (it is assumed that a child attending school full-time is not working). The project's follow-up of the children at home, for example on health-related issues and on their effective working status, has been limited.

At-risk and victim children and their parents were not always aware of the existence of the lists or of their function. The project may want to consider training the children and their parents about the lists and to explain the function of those lists, as well as explain where they can obtain advice in case of any emergency (e.g., through contacting an APE or a facilitator).

6. *Assess the project's effectiveness in receiving, rehabilitating, reintegrating, and reinserting child trafficking victims. To what extent is the project addressing education barriers confronted by the target children? Prior to reintegrating them into their communities? After reintegration?*

The three project NGOs (i.e., CRS, TdH, and WE) have established good contacts and links between each other, with other organizations (e.g., Red Cross), and with relevant government institutions (e.g., police and legal institutions) to receive, rehabilitate, and reintegrate victim children.

The integration process is not the same for children in the 100 target communities and those monitored by TdH at the Oasis Center. TdH is capable of providing a larger range of services (including counseling) and better follow-up after reintegration. Their follow-up includes an assessment of each individual child's needs to ensure that the children can continue to attend school or an apprenticeship. When needed, TdH provides direct services (e.g., food, clothing, birth certificates, and school supplies).

The education barriers that are confronted by working children are of three different types—

1. **Age-related:** The project has lobbied among local authorities to accept enrollment of children above school age. In certain instances, the project has found alternative opportunities for the child (in the form of NFE, vocational training at Caritas Centers, or in professional workshops).

2. **Cost of schooling:** The project, through TdH/UNICEF, has been able to assist about half of the project's direct beneficiaries with school supplies, including school books, khaki uniforms, pens and pencils, and school bags.[26] The project's provision of other types of assistance to at-risk or victim children (e.g., breakfast or birth certificates) has been limited.

3. **Opportunity costs:** The project has not provided assistance in finding alternative income for poor families who are profiting, one way or another, from children's work.

Each of these categories (i.e., enrollment of overage students, finding alternative school opportunities, and/or improving attainment through provision of school supplies) has, according to project statistics, led to a lower dropout rate among project-supported children and to a higher enrollment of children who are above the school age. The dropout rate among at-risk and victim children is estimated at 4 percent, while it would probably have been much higher if these children did not receive any follow-up (the general dropout rate in the schools receiving project funding is 8 percent). The project statistics do not allow a precise analysis of the actual effect of the project for each of the education barriers. It should be noted that the last barrier (opportunity costs of schooling) has received little attention from the project.[27]

> 7. *Assess the project's effectiveness in preventing trafficking of at-risk children through improved educational opportunities.*

The project's effectiveness of preventing trafficking could not be measured within the scope of this evaluation. Such a measurement would necessitate a research strategy using a test and a control group, measuring trafficking in areas without and with project intervention. Most respondents found that the strategy of the project was "sound" and "effective."

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[26] In the North, about half of the project's direct beneficiaries received TdH/UNICEF school supplies. In the Zou, however, some schools established alternative lists of children in need (i.e., lists that did not match the lists of at-risk or victim children). At the time of the evaluation, it was unknown how many at-risk or victim children received TdH/UNICEF school supplies in the Zou.

[27] This is not meant as a criticism of the project: a poverty-based approach would have required a different project intervention strategy.

The project has addressed the question of trafficking through a three-pronged strategy: (1) awareness raising of trafficking and education, (2) micro projects that have enabled more children to enroll in school, and (3) specific follow-up of at-risk and trafficked children, ensuring that they are attending school. The project personnel have also advocated for school districts to enroll children above school age in primary school.

Respondents noted two main problems with the strategy—

1. In certain areas, the hope of getting special attention from projects may actually encourage families to traffic their children (this attention is popularly called "the bonus of the traffic").

2. The project is centered on the follow-up of the schooling of the children. Local police authorities told us that most children were trafficked during the holidays. Therefore, the project provides the best protection (through APE follow-up) during the periods when there is the least risk of being trafficked.[28]

The follow-up is limited to children in school. In many villages, the majority of the children are working with their parents in the fields and do not attend primary school. Although the project has addressed this issue through awareness-raising initiatives among the local population, there are still a large number of children falling outside the scope of the project, especially because very few alternatives to formal schooling (e.g., NFE) can be offered. Besides, the project has no way of compensating the opportunity costs that are lost for families enrolling their children in school, or the direct costs incurred by schooling.

> 8. *Assess changes in enrollment and dropout in project communities, as well as changes in the quality of education available. What role has the project played in bringing about these changes? Please also consider the quality, availability, and appropriateness of the various educational modes—formal, nonformal, and vocational/skills training.*

According to project statistics, the overall dropout rate among the children managed by the project's lists of at-risk and victim children is 4 percent against an overall dropout rate of 8 percent in the same schools. Therefore, APE management of the school lists seems to improve the retention rate.[29]

The project has improved the quality of education through the micro projects. For example, new or repaired buildings have made it possible for many children to attend school during rainy days.

The availability of alternative modes of education (e.g., NFE) is limited. Most of the interviewed children and parents prefer sending their children to primary school. The majority of those sending children to alternative schooling are not able to afford the higher opportunity and direct

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[28] APEs do not focus exclusively on activities that take place during the school year. According to one respondent, they often recover children from "vidomégan" situations during the vacation period. HIV/AIDS training is also done during school break periods.

[29] The problems noted above with lists that are not up to date, changes of children's names, and unverified transfers to other school areas, are factors limiting the statistical validity of these numbers.

costs of primary school. The children interviewed in the alternative schools stated they were "happy to attend literacy classes" but "would have preferred primary schooling." The Caritas Centers offer a high-quality alternative to primary school, mostly for girls. The project's assistance has enabled the Caritas Centers to purchase additional school supplies for the children.

9. *Assess the effectiveness of the project's awareness-raising activities. How have attitudes toward child trafficking and education been affected at various levels—community, regional, and national?*

The awareness-raising activities of the project have been performed through three main means—

1. The project has bought radio time for awareness-raising messages. The church dioceses have managed this part of the awareness raising (except in Parakou). The TdH Child Psychiatrist also gave technical assistance and participated in the radio programs in the Zou.

2. Paralegal volunteers have held awareness-raising meetings in the communities.

3. The TdH team has shown *Anna, Bazil, and the Traficant* in the communities and held awareness-raising sessions related to this movie.

The effect of the awareness-raising initiatives was generally positive insomuch as it created a public opinion against trafficking. Some respondents said that the messages had a positive effect on families that were involved in trafficking, many of which had not previously realized the danger of trafficking their children.

Some respondents note that the messages were of a moralizing nature, which may have limited the effect on people involved in trafficking. For example, some families remained untouched by the messages, saying that, "If I eat sand, my children eat sand." The messages may have limited effect on parents living in poverty, and may also constitute a future problem, since those benefiting from children's work may become averse to child trafficking projects and the project personnel because of the awareness-raising messages. Therefore, overly moralizing messages may create resistance to behavior change by families and the people benefiting from trafficking.[30]

The project management noted that the messages were not designed to raise awareness among traffickers, which would require a completely different approach. According to USDOL and other donors and protection agency policies, it is necessary to remove children from the worst forms of child labor. Therefore, it would be difficult to set up awareness raising messages for traffickers to treat the children better.

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[30] Most stakeholders found the awareness-raising methods adequate. However, a few key informants said that the current awareness methods would be inadequate if the project were to work on trafficking flows, instead of exclusively trying to prevent departure from certain zones.

10. *Assess the project's work with communities, particularly with regard to building community capacity. To what extent has the project been able to strengthen the capacity of key civil society organizations, such as Parent Associations (APEs) and communities to monitor and follow-up on the education of child trafficking victims and children at risk of being trafficked?*

One of the project's main outcomes is the strengthening of APEs. Through the project, APE members have received training in a variety of subjects, such as management, identification, and enrollment of local children at school age,[31] follow-up on victim and at-risk children, and preparation for the school year. The capacity building of APE members to improve their knowledge and performance in school management and child protection has been successful. The project's work with other community institutions has been limited (in some cases, the UNICEF-supported Village Committee Against Child Trafficking has been involved in project activities).

11. *Assess how the project has strengthened national institutions and policies on education and child trafficking in Benin. How has the project progressed in establishing the theme of child trafficking in public policy decision makers' agenda?*

The NGO working group GTI has been working at central level, especially with the child protection committee in charge of establishing an anti-trafficking law in Benin.[32]

The project is primarily working on a decentralized level. It has not established any special connection with the central ministries and has therefore not had any role in strengthening national institutions at the central level other than through its work with GTI. Some individual staff members (e.g., TdH staff) have maintained a strong working relationship with the Ministry of the Family and continue to work on strengthening its role in child protection, particularly as a member of the newly instituted National Committee for Child Protection.

2.2.2   Conclusion

Both the project's design and its actual implementation have supported the four EI goals, because (1) local stakeholders are now aware of the problems of child trafficking, (2) different initiatives (e.g., training of APE members, advocacy at local school administrations, and discussions and follow-up with parents) have enabled at-risk and victim children to attend different types of educational activities, (3) GTI has helped to promote the creation of an anti-trafficking law, (4) an exit strategy that will promote the project's sustainability is under development.

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[31] The age of the children is often not known and must be "identified" (i.e., established more or less arbitrary by APE, parents, or the school).

[32] The inputs of GTI were not taken into account for the establishment of the law, which, according to some respondents, will become a liability rather than an advantage insomuch as it is not regulating trafficking of children, but restricting the freedom of circulation for children and youth. However, GTI hopes to be able to influence the application decree of the law to make its actual implementation effective.

Quantitatively speaking, the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries exceeds EFP targets. It should be noted, however, that the project management and this evaluation have used a liberal interpretation of USDOL's definition of "direct educational services." If one uses a very narrow reading of this definition, the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries would not reach EFP targets. A narrow reading of the interpretation (and provision of individual handouts) may also have increased the risk of encouraging parents to traffic their children to receive direct project assistance.

Most of the project outputs are on schedule. Project Output 1 is on schedule—the project has helped increase local awareness about child trafficking and the benefits of schooling. Project Output 2.1 is on schedule—local EPCCs have been created in most of the target communities and have improved access and retention in education programs by monitoring lists of victim and at-risk children. Project Output 2.2 is on schedule—90 percent of the primary public schools have received some form of assistance. Project Output 2.3 is not on schedule, because only four communities have access to NFE classes (and a limited number of communities have access to Caritas Center vocational training). Project Output 2.4 is on schedule—the primary education schools have been strengthened through the setup of 61 micro projects. Project Output 3.1 is on schedule—APE members have been trained to follow up on education and protection of at-risk children. Project Output 3.2 is on schedule—APEs are also following up on victim children. For Project Outputs 3.1 and 3.2, the systems for protection and monitoring are fairly limited and, as noted above, the services provided do not always correspond exactly to USDOL's definitions of direct educational services. Project Output 3.3 is on schedule—the project has set up an informal network for active detection and protection of victim children and is looking at ways to formalize this network. Project Output 3.4 is on schedule—the project provides funding for the Caritas Centers and the Oasis Center. The financing is not targeted at improving any specific service, but enables the centers to assist an increased number of victim children. Project Output 4 is on schedule—political authorities at the local and national levels (through GTI) have improved knowledge to child trafficking issues and develop policies for better child protection. The studies on child trafficking have led to an improved knowledge to the subject.

2.2.3   Recommendations

The provision of support to victim and at-risk children should be further investigated and, if needed, improved. Also, for Project Output 2.3, which is not on schedule, opportunities for strengthening NFE, and revising the target for this component should be investigated.

How supporting school cantinas and establishing birth certificate micro projects can strengthen the schooling of the most vulnerable (i.e., those not able to pay the required fees) should be investigated.

To improve the project's performance, (1) the notion of direct beneficiaries and the services they ought to receive should be clarified, and (2) the project objectives concerning NFE should be revised. As for implementation issues, it is recommended to (3) pilot project interaction with trafficking flows (e.g., by targeting awareness-raising messages to people employing children as domestic help or vidomegons, and proposing alternative schooling for these children). (4) Work-and-study holidays should be organized in some pilot communities, which would

enable children to earn some money by having a summer job, while participating in study groups.[33]

The effect of awareness-raising messages should be investigated, focusing on possibilities to diversify them and/or to adapt them to different target groups.

Finally, how communities and APEs perceive the lists of at-risk or victim children should be investigated. In a predominantly oral society, these lists may not have much other sense than satisfying an abstract and top-down need for data (one respondent characterized them as "the white men's lists"). The precision of the statistics accumulated through the follow-up on this tracking system is fragile, at best.

2.3 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION ISSUES

This project is based on the cooperation between three international NGOs (i.e., CRS, TdH, and WE), though a number of local NGOs were associated during the project's first two years. After two years, this cooperation was discontinued and the project opted to work directly with community facilitators. The project's main work is at a decentralized level, coordinating activities between local actors involved in the fight against child trafficking (e.g., defense, police, judiciary institutions, APEs, Caritas Centers, and Oasis Center). The project's coordination with central institutions such as the Ministry of Education or the Direction of Literacy and Adult Education has been very limited, if not nonexistent. At the central level, the project has participated and been a key actor in the NGO working group GTI.[34] GTI's connections with the National Committee for Child Protection and the MFPSS have helped improve awareness and strengthen collaboration at the central level.

2.3.1 Findings

1. *What have been the major issues and challenges involved in managing the working relationship between CRS, World Education, and* Terre des Hommes*? Has this been a productive partnership?*

The partnership between CRS, TdH, and WE has been productive. Each respondent said that the personnel from the different NGOs had been able to learn something from one another during the implementation of this project. Also, the project has benefited from each NGO's comparative advantage: CRS has a very close connection to the Catholic Church and has been able to use this connection for awareness-raising activities and for cooperation with Caritas Centers for protection of victim and at-risk children. TdH has specific experience on child trafficking and has been vital in the training of personnel in this area. WE has extensive experience with APEs in Benin, and has been able to raise awareness and build capacity at the community level by coordinating with APEs. During the evaluation, it was clear that CRS is the lead agency for the implementation of the project, and that there was an effective collaboration between the agencies.

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[33] Such program has already been set up on the children's own initiative in one of the villages visited during the evaluation mission (village of Séréwondirou in the district of Nikki, department of Borgou).
[34] GTI was created with EFP support.

Two levels of problems were noted, both of which are related to the vague formulation of the project document—

Administration

There has been some disagreement about the administrative set up of the project, especially about who is managing whom (at field level), how, and when? For example, some CRS staff members have been based in WE's local offices, and it was at times unclear who should manage them.

According to some respondents, there has been an overemphasis on education matters and not enough follow-up on protection of victim and at-risk children. Each of the three NGOs brought its own mandate to the project. This has generally been positive, but was also at times a problem, because each NGO has the tendency to stand up for its own mandate. CRS and WE specialize in education-related work, while TdH is the group with most experience on issues related to trafficking and protection. Therefore, at times some personnel felt that their mandate was not sufficiently taken into account by the project as a whole. The field activities were largely organized by APEs and local facilitators, who reported to WE. Some project stakeholders held that these field activities were not sufficiently protection-oriented.

The Project's Role

The aforementioned problem was exacerbated by the lack of definitions in the project document. The project document was, for example, unclear about its role in relation to the APEs. Therefore, according to respondents from one NGO, the role of the project was to stimulate protection of at-risk and victim children through training of APE personnel, but not through redefining the APEs educational mandate. Personnel from another NGO understood that the project should work both at policy and local levels to include protection into the APEs' mandate. The two interpretations of the project document resulted in different work strategies, and led to some disagreement about the project's approaches.

The question of the project's role had not been discussed in depth among the three collaborating NGOs at the time of the evaluation. To understand the project's management and goals, it is necessary to clarify both the project's administrative arrangements and the different actors' understanding of the project's long-term objectives.

> 2. *What have been the major challenges and opportunities, if any, of implementing coordination with the host country government, particularly the Ministries of Family, Education, and Labor? How effectively has the project been able to enhance collaboration among government institutions concerning the education of child victims of trafficking and children at risk of being trafficked?*

The main problem of the collaboration with the host country government, according to respondents from the three NGOs, was the quick turnover of key personnel. Civil servants interviewed at the MFPSS and at the Ministry of Education claimed that they did not know about the project.

There is a connection to some central institutions, in particular the MFPSS, through GTI. However, there is no cooperation with education institutions at central level (Ministry of Education and the Direction of Literacy and Adult Education), yet the project's cooperation with local institutions (including education institutions) is well established.

3. *Assess the effectiveness of the project utilizing APEs in organizing Local Education and Protection Coordinating Committees? Who composes these committees? What stage of development are they in, and what is the likelihood that they will endure in the long term?*

APE committees are composed of farmers and retired civil servants (these latter often function as secretary or treasurer of the group, because they are literate). Few women participate in APEs, a problem that WE addressed by stimulating the creation of Mothers' Associations (AME) in certain communities. The project's work to create capacity at APEs and AMEs is considered sustainable, because these are school-related associations financed through a long-term commitment by the government. In terms of sustainability, the only weakness of the work among the APEs is linked to the regular renewal of the APE members (each member is selected for a period of three years; their mandate is renewable once). The project is attempting to address this potential limitation of sustainability by ensuring a crossover of experienced members debriefing new members about their role in the APE.

The project encourages APEs to create community EPCCs. These committees are a project-related creation and mix the mandate of the APEs and the UNICEF-sponsored community Committee Against Child Trafficking.

At this time, there are three types of EPCCs—

1. In many villages, EPCC members are the same as APE members.

2. In some villages, the EPCC is constituted by APE members and other key community members (often the extra members are from the community Committee Against Child Trafficking).

3. In a few communities, where there is no APE, the EPCC consists of members from the community Committee Against Child Trafficking.

Most respondents were skeptical to externally, top-down created committees, such as EPCC or the community Committee Against Child Trafficking. The project strength is linked to its capacity building work among APEs, not as theoretical institution building at the EPCC level. This latter is uncertain to sustain beyond the project's duration.

4. *To what extent, and how effectively, has CRS worked with the ILO-IPEC's regional child trafficking project (LUTRENA)? What have been the major challenges and opportunities, if any, of implementing coordination with ILO-IPEC?*

The coordination between CRS and LUTRENA occurs through the framework of the Informal Working Group. No formal cooperation exists. This evaluation did not find any duplication of efforts between EFP and LUTRENA.

5. *What have been some of the challenges and issues in working with local NGOs and other local organizations?*

The main challenge of working with local NGOs was that they required constant supervision to deliver services in a timely fashion. The project document gave no clear definition of the mode of cooperation with local NGOs, which were hired for a period of two years, and after which facilitators were hired to work directly with the project (all other work with local NGOs was discontinued). At present, the project has no formal cooperation agreements with local NGOs.

6. *What have been some of the challenges and issues of working with USDOL under this cooperative agreement?*

The lack of clarity of definitions in the project document has led to some difficulties in the cooperation with USDOL. At the field level, it was felt that USDOL arbitrarily changed basic project definitions and objectives. The changes include new definitions of direct and indirect beneficiaries, and new definitions distinguishing vocational training from NFE. Most respondents said that the USDOL reporting format has been changed repeatedly and is currently not in line with the software monitoring tools provided (by USDOL) to track the beneficiaries. These problems can be avoided by providing clear definitions for each intervention in the original project document and sticking to these definitions.

2.3.2   Conclusion

The collaboration between CRS, TdH, and WE has been productive and has only faced minor obstacles, none of which have had significant effect on the project delivery. The main challenges in the setup were connected to the understanding the different actors had of the project's role. A similar problem was noted in the relationship between USDOL and the local partners: each actor had a different understanding of key project concepts.

The collaboration with the host country government was difficult because of the quick turnover of key government personnel. Though GTI maintained a connection with certain central actors, such as the MFPSS, the cooperation with education institutions at central level was nonexistent.

At the local level, the project built capacity work with APEs. Cooperation with local NGOs had been discontinued and there are no efforts to transfer capacity to local NGOs at this time (the facilitators were hired directly by the project).

2.3.3   Recommendations

The partnership between the three NGOs has been a fruitful and positive experience, and similar co-implementation arrangements could be duplicated elsewhere. All project concepts in the project document should be clarified, with practical examples if needed. Communication between USDOL and EFP needs to be improved (e.g., by regular teleconferences between Washington and key project staff).

The cooperation with local NGOs was for the most part done through WE's interaction and training of local facilitators during the project's first two years. The discontinuation of work with

these NGOs limits the project's ability to strengthen local civil society in the struggle against child trafficking. Future projects should seek to establish a capacity building plan for local NGOs to strengthen local civil society's capacity to combat child trafficking practices.

Finally, the project's decentralization strategy has led to strong local coordination of activities. The project, however, lacks a strong central-institution connection. Such a connection to central institutions should be made during the next implementation phase, in particular with the Ministry of Education and with the Director of Literacy and Adult Education. The aim of this interaction should be to raise awareness among key educational personnel concerning the plight of the children in relation to child trafficking.

The subject of establishing birth certificates should be addressed, because a child's lack of a birth certificate inevitably leads to dropout and increases his or her chance of being trafficked. For this effort to be sustainable, it should be addressed at the central-policy level, and not merely consist of EFP provision of birth certificates for a limited number of children in the project.

2.4   MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET ISSUES

The project personnel have made use of different planning, budgeting, and reporting tools to manage the project (these tools are translated into French). The main part of the project budget is used for personnel costs and fringe benefits (47 percent) and an additional 14 percent goes to indirect charges.

2.4.1   Findings

1. *What are the management strengths of this project? What management areas, including technical and financial, could be improved?*

The partnership between CRS, TdH, and WE has been productive and generally well-managed through regular coordination meetings. The confusion surrounding the administrative set up of the project could be addressed by clarifying who is managing whom, how, and when. Core project definitions, such as the role of the project in relation to APEs, should also be discussed and agreed upon by the three partner organizations.

Project management noted that the over delivery on some targets (e.g., 61 percent of the communities have micro projects, against a planned 40 percent for project period 6) and under delivery of certain targets (e.g., 4 percent of the communities have NFE, against a planned 40 percent for project period 6) were not a result of a lack of communication or lack of planning, but rather a willingness to reach and exceed minimum targets.[35]

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[35] This over and under delivery on targets is not a problem in itself. The project needs to adapt to local realities—and to the budget raising efforts necessary to make possible the implementation of planned project activities.

2. *How effective has the working relationship been between the CRS field office and their U.S. headquarters?*

CRS personnel stated that the working relationship with their headquarters was good. The evaluation found nothing in that working relationship that affected the project in any particular way, positively or negatively.

3. *How effectively has project management used management tools, such as the project work plan and the PMP, to enhance strategic planning and target setting?*

The project personnel's use of management tools has been effective, insomuch as activities are generally well-coordinated and most staff has a clear understanding of ongoing activities. The management tools have been translated into French and are being used by the project personnel. These tools include a logical framework (cadre logique) and a common management and activities plan. The three partner NGOs also have their own work plan for each zone and for each staff member.

Every community facilitator has a weekly work plan that is submitted to and approved by the Community Program Manager (CPM). The community facilitators' tools include "modules de formation," which are training plans for APEs, outlining each training session provided to APE members. The facilitator trains the APE members in such issues as APE management, how to prepare and follow up on micro projects, how to prepare the new school year, and how to follow up on the children's schooling status.

4. *Assess the achievements of the project to date in comparison to funds expended to date.*

Most respondents considered the project highly cost effective.[36] Achievements of the project must be considered against the project budget. The cost structure of the project is somewhat unusual, because personnel costs and fringe benefits represent 47 percent of the budget.[37] One

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[36] A cost-effectiveness analysis will necessitate detailed cost comparisons with alternative projects and initiatives. This has been considered outside the scope of the evaluation. See the list in Annex D for cost of activities and unit costs. This evaluation has not found any of these cost to be outside of what would be consider normal for the activity, nor has any of the respondents indicated that any of the costs are too high in terms of results achieved.

[37] Project budget structure (current, by percentage):

Cost category	% of total
a. Personnel	36%
b. Fringe Benefits	11%
c. Travel	8%
d. Equipment	6%
e. Supplies	6%
f. Contractual	10%
g. Construction	-
h. Other	9%
i. Total Direct Charges	86%
j. Indirect Charges	14%
k. TOTAL	100%

danger with such a cost structure is that the project will have capable experts but not enough funds to implement many project activities, thereby not maximizing the use of the experts' skills. This danger is partially offset by the EFP's leveraging of funds from other financial institutions (see Annex E for list of cooperation agreements and financing obtained through the framework of this project).

5. *Please assess the procedures in place by CRS for gathering the partners' budgetary and technical information for USDOL reporting requirements and indicate if the information is sent to CRS in a timely manner and if follow-up communications are needed.*

As for technical issues, the information-gathering method is difficult in an oral society. One CPM noted, "In order to respect the delays, we have sometimes to 'skip information' [that we did not receive in time]," (i.e., the project staff used previous numbers, instead of updated numbers, in the cases where they did not get timely reports from the field). The information collection procedures are theoretically good, though it has some practical limits (e.g., limited local understanding of the uses of the tracking system).

Budgetary information is provided from TdH's Cotonou office and WE's Boston office. The respondents indicated no any particular problems related to the budgetary reporting process.

6. *Has USDOL technical assistance in understanding federal reporting requirements (e.g., GPRA, feedback on Technical Progress Reports, and overall communications between CRS and USDOL) been adequate?*

Many respondents felt that the communication between USDOL and the project staff was too one-sided (i.e., that USDOL made decisions and informed the stakeholders accordingly, without sufficient dialogue about the practical consequences of these decisions). Regular teleconferences should be arranged between USDOL and the project management committee to discuss pending issues, including unclear issues in the project document.

2.4.2   Conclusion

Project activities were well-coordinated and most of the staff members have a clear view of ongoing activities. Regular meetings are held between the core personnel of the three NGOs to ensure that the implementation is on schedule. There was some confusion among the main actors concerning the personnel management structures and the project's mandate. The management tools (such as logical framework, common management, and activities plan) have been translated into French and are being used by the project personnel. Most respondents considered the project highly cost effective, especially because it has been able to leverage funds from other financial institutions. Such leveraging of funds was necessary, because the project lacked the necessary funds to implement the scheduled activities. The budget was inadequate for implementation most of the project's objectives.

2.4.3   Recommendations

The problems connected to the stakeholders' different views of the project could be cleared up through a workshop—in which all the key actors revise the project's objectives and agree on the implementation structure and on the activities to focus on during the project's last phase.

USDOL should fund future projects so that the budget is aligned with the project's objectives, and so the project does not need to rely on fund raising from other donors to implement its stated objectives.

2.5   SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT

2.5.1   Findings

The project's objectives aim to reduce child trafficking through improved education opportunities. Impact is sought in three areas: (1) increased awareness about the problem of child trafficking and about the benefits of schooling, (2) better learning opportunities leading to better instruction and an increased number of children in school, (3) detection, rehabilitation, reinsertion, and reintegration of victim children and protection of at-risk children through school structures. Sustainability is sought by conducting workshops and research-action projects as well as stimulating other organizations to participate in the struggle against child trafficking.

> 1. *Where does the project stand in terms of identifying an effective exit strategy that will promote long-term sustainability? Was the project's initial strategy for sustainability adequate and appropriate?[38]*

As noted above, the EFP was not asked to submit an exit strategy. New management guidelines have requested that an exit strategy be submitted in September 2006, and the project management is currently working on this issue. The project's indicators for sustainability are (1) a minimum of 15 collaborative efforts and research-action projects set up, and (2) the number of children who benefit directly or indirectly from project collaboration with the Benin Government or other organizations. Though these targets are considered to be on schedule, it is difficult to see how they form an appropriate exit strategy.

Additional activities that should be considered to improve the project's sustainability include the setup of training procedures for new APE members (to make sure that the former members train the new ones), the inclusion of protection into the APE mandate, and the setup of a formal structure for active detection, rehabilitation, and reinsertion/reintegration of victim children.

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[38] Project stakeholders noted that, "No exit strategy was asked for from our project, either at the beginning or during its first two years of implementation." This is another new requirement as of this year and the EFP will submit its first draft in September 2006."

2. *What appears to be the project's impact to date, if any, on (1) individual beneficiaries (children, parents, teachers, etc.), (2) partner organizations (local NGOs, community groups, schools, etc.), and (3) government and policy structures in terms of system-wide change on education and child labor issues?*

The main project impact on individuals, partner organizations, and government structures are: (1) increased awareness about the problem of child trafficking at all levels, and (2) better schooling opportunities for direct and indirect beneficiaries, which is likely to have brought about (3) reduced trafficking in the project zones.

Table 1: Project Impact on Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Activity	Main Impact
At-risk and victim children	Enrollment in learning programs (formal or NFE)	Education
Indirect beneficiaries	Micro projects	Higher enrollment, better quality of schooling, leading to improved attainment
Parents and community leaders	Awareness raising	Increased awareness of the problem of child trafficking Reduced trafficking
Teachers and APE members	Awareness raising	Increased awareness of the problem of child trafficking Follow-up of at-risk children, leading to better attainment
Partner organizations	Awareness raising	Improved coordination (through GTI), increased awareness of the problem of child trafficking
Government structures	Awareness raising, coordination with GTI	Policy development, increased awareness of the problem of child trafficking

The project is on schedule insomuch as it is having a positive impact on (1) individual beneficiaries (e.g., children, parents, and teachers), and (2) partner organizations (especially APEs). The effect the project has had on government and policy structures in terms of system-wide change on education and child labor issues is connected to GTI, which has been a main advocate for the adoption of a law against child trafficking.

3. *How effective has the project been at reaching out to local communities, getting local buy-in, and generating support for project activities and goals? How effective has the project been at stimulating interest in the project at the level of communities and parents? How has such commitment to the project changed over time? Assess the capacity and motivation of community members to continue their involvement with the issue once the project has ended.*

The project has used APEs as a main entry point for community-related work. This strategy has proved effective, in part because APEs are already in place and are part of the community's school structure. The project's capacity building work at the APE level is, therefore, sustainable. These committees will continue beyond the project's lifetime.

The commitment to the project has been stimulated through the setup of school canteens and micro projects, and by the distribution of supplies through TdH/UNICEF. The provision of some concrete item, be it school supplies or a micro project, is seen as very important at the community level. Capacity building and awareness-raising meetings involve an opportunity cost for the attendees (e.g., APE members), and they would like to see a concrete outcome of the costs they incur. Some interviewees said that the project's lack of provision of concrete services to the target beneficiaries made them ashamed: "We were at first ashamed of the project," said a facilitator, "but now we have distributed the [TdH/UNICEF-funded] supplies, so I guess it's all right."[39]

This project's distribution of school supplies and the micro projects compensate opportunity costs incurred by APE members, because the community benefits from the project in terms of improved schooling. The project avoided providing direct assistance to families of trafficked children, an action which could have perverse effects (i.e., families getting involved in trafficking just to receive project support).

> 4. *How has the project changed perceptions—at all levels: community, parents, children, government, etc.—about the importance of education for children as an alternative to child labor? What has been the impact of the project on national policies that relate to children, child labor, and education? Please provide specific examples from beneficiaries.*

The project has helped to create a public opinion against trafficking. Many of the awareness-raising messages, however, have been of a moralizing nature, which might have a limited effect on people involved in trafficking.

As for the perception on school benefits, the project has helped to create a public opinion supporting schooling in the communities. Most APE members, children, and adults interviewed during the evaluation said that schooling was "necessary" for children. However, the understanding of the benefits of schooling was limited and rarely linked to practical issues. One student attending a Coran school stated that he would have preferred attending formal school to "become like us [the evaluation mission];" and most groups of APE members and parents were unable to state a single benefit of formal schooling except that it provided "knowledge." The idea of knowledge was abstract, implying something unclear, but which must be important. Part of the problem is that in Benin, as noted by one key stakeholder, "The low quality of formal education, constant teacher strikes, and disconnect between education and work has lead to people not seeing the value of school."

Only in one locality did the parents have a clear vision of the needs of schooling: "At least one child in each family needs to attend the school. Then, if the authorities, for example the police [gendarmerie], convoke the family to something, one knows what it is about. Also, that [educated] child can assist with the measuring of cotton [to check that the family is not being cheated]."

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[39] In one community visited during the evaluation, the idea of a direct compensation for incurred opportunity costs was taken quite literally, and each of the APE members received one TdH/UNICEF supply kit for their own children.

At regional administration levels, the project has raised awareness of children's plights, especially at police and judiciary levels. At national education policy levels, the project has had little impact except for the policy work through GTI.

5. *What evidence is there of government willingness to carry on project implementation or objectives once the project has ended? Is the project actively working to achieve this as an outcome?*

At the central level, government officials are not aware of the work of the project and there is no indication that any institution would take up its work (e.g., building capacity at the APE level to protect trafficked and at-risk children). At decentralized levels, there are some signs that the regional APE administration may be willing and able to continue the APE-related work started by the project. It is doubtful, however, that they can do so without outside funding. Project management noted that the need for outside funding would be minimal because the APEs are government recognized associations with membership fees and therefore have their own source of funding.

As for detection, rehabilitation, and reinsertion work, the project has started work to formalize its current informal structures for active detection and rehabilitation of victim children. One main limitation in the setup of formal structures is related to the lack of funds to finance government institution interventions (e.g., to transport children from an exploitive situation to a rehabilitation center). There is little willingness at the central level to provide funding for this kind of work.

6. *Among the project's interventions, (improved quality of curriculum, teacher training, parental involvement against child trafficking, awareness raising campaigns, and national/regional/local level advocacy), which intervention has had the greatest impact on reducing child labor and increasing school enrollments thus far? Which has had the least? Please seek the opinions of a range of interviewees.*

The project's intervention used multiple strategies that have proved effective to reduce child labor and increase schooling, including (1) micro projects, (2) work with APEs, (3) various forms of awareness raising, and (4) collaboration with Caritas Centers and Oasis Center. Most interviewees underscored the necessity of multiple approaches. One respondent said, "You can't beat it [trafficking] with a single medication. You need a multiple-intervention strategy, involving many of the community institutions, including APEs, the families and clans, the local committee against trafficking, and the village elders."

Several respondents felt that the project relied too much on APEs and that it did not sufficiently draw on other resources in the communities. Others argued that the project provided most of its support to formal education (through micro projects and APE training) and that other initiatives (e.g., protection work, NFE) had not been sufficiently developed.

Several of the project's strategies did not have a direct role in preventing trafficking. For example, most of the micro projects strengthened the local primary schools but did not have any direct effect on trafficking other than enabling more children to enrol in school or to attend school during the rainy period. It is uncertain whether these micro projects are the most cost effective way to prevent trafficking. It should be recognized that the goal of the micro projects

was to increase access to education and not protection, which is another objective and requires different strategies. Protection efforts are being headed by the trafficking specialist TdH and not the community-education specialist WE.

Many families, when asked about trafficking, replied, "When I eat sand, my children eat sand" (i.e., the trafficking issue was considered to be part of a greater poverty problem). The project did not address poverty, but choose to address trafficking in its school-related connections. A multi-pronged approach addressing the lack of education and poverty may have had a greater effect than a project based solely on education initiatives. Poverty could be addressed through micro credit schemes or parents' NFE classes combing literacy and income-generating activities such as micro gardens. Needless to say, implementation of such a multi-pronged approach would have necessitated a greatly reduced number of target communities involved in the project and/or substantially increased funding.

The project's strategy of setting targets that exceed the limited funding available, relying instead on the leveraging of funds from other donors and/or cooperation with other projects to implement activities, has some serious limitations. Such a budgeting strategy creates a dependency on projects and donors that do not necessarily share the same vision, or the same intervention zone and strategy as EFP. For example, the project received school supplies for less than half of the project's direct beneficiaries, but because all the direct beneficiaries interviewed lacked school supplies, it is uncertain whether the provision of this service was the most cost-effective method to protect at-risk and trafficked children and ensure their enrolment and/or attainment. The establishment of identity cards and/or the provision of food might have been much more effective in ensuring the continued schooling of children. However, the project's reliance on outside donor intervention to finance direct service provision for at-risk and trafficked children seriously limited the possibility of providing flexible and case-by-case evaluation services.

7. *To what extent would it be possible to replicate the project's work in other regions? What efforts would be most easily transferable?*

One of the project's innovative approaches has been its work with APEs. Most regions have some form of APEs, and a similar project setup could easily (and advantageously) be transferred.

8. *What lessons could be learned to date in terms of the project's accomplishments and weaknesses in terms of sustainability of interventions?*

Some of EFP's positive innovations are (1) the work with APEs, (2) the creation of GTI, and (3) the cooperation demonstrated between the three NGOs, and the cooperation with the Oasis Center and the Catholic Church.

As noted above, the project's work with APEs has been a positive innovation that can be duplicated elsewhere. Another positive outcome of the project is the NGO working group GTI, which has improved cooperation between actors and raised awareness at central-government levels on the issue of child trafficking. The use of three NGOs and the Catholic Church, each contributing to the fight against trafficking in a different way, has enabled a wider range of activities and services than what could have been implemented through a single NGO.

Other lessons learned include the following:

- The need to provide sufficient funds to implement the project's planned activities instead of making EFP reliant on fund-raising activities.

- The need to use integrated, community-based approaches that address child trafficking from multiple perspectives, and involve multiple community actors, such as the Chief of Village, Women's Groups, Village Committees Against Child Trafficking, and family and clan structures.

- The need to consider traffic flows. If the project only operates in departure zones, there is a great risk that the people who rely on children's work will change trafficking routes. Child trafficking projects need to follow the trafficking patterns (i.e., departure zones, transit routes, and receipt areas). There are indications that the trafficking patterns in Benin are changing (partly because of this and other projects' activities).

- The need to make a clear project document with clearly defined concepts (e.g., notion of direct beneficiaries).

9. *If the project will not meet its end of project goals, what corrective measures could be taken to achieve them?*

Certain projects goals need to be revised, for example, the provision of NFE services cannot be extended to 50 percent of the communities within the lifetime of the project. This target should be revised to 20 percent.

USDOL and the project management should agree on clear definitions of interventions and goals. For example, the notion of "direct beneficiary" needs to be clarified, as well as the notion of services to be provided to the beneficiaries.

2.5.2   Conclusion

The project is reducing child trafficking through awareness raising and improved educational opportunities. Project activities have led to an increased awareness about the problems of child trafficking, and about the benefits of schooling, better learning opportunities, and detection, rehabilitation, reinsertion, and reintegration of victim children. EFP has also increased awareness of how at-risk children can be protected through school structures. Most of EFP's objectives are successfully being realized.

2.5.3   Recommendations

The sustainability and exit strategies of the project need to be more clearly defined to ensure that project activities will continue beyond the scope of the project.

III   BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

During the midterm evaluation of the EFP, it was clear that project stakeholders had a good understanding of the problems associated with child trafficking in Africa, and of how to address these problems. These lessons should be used in future project implementation, in Benin and internationally.

For new projects, attention should be given to the overall cohesion of the project document to ensure that the project objectives can realistically be implemented within the proposed budget and time frame, and the project objectives and activities should be clearly outlined. It would be beneficial if these project definitions, objectives, and reporting formats remained unchanged (by the USDOL or by the project implementing agencies) unless unexpected circumstances arise.

- Clear project document

- Precise definitions

- Budget matches implementation targets

- No changes unless implementation circumstances changes

The actual service provision should be estimated in unit costs per direct beneficiary to clarify exactly which services the project will offer (and what it cannot offer). Special attention should be given to the nature of these services to avoid the perverse effect of parents trafficking their children to meet the project's criteria for becoming primary beneficiaries.

Trafficking flows should be considered, so that trafficking routes are not changed because of project intervention in a departure zone. The flow-based work would result in direct contact between the project and users of children's services. Working with flows means that the language of awareness-raising messages should be nuanced according to the target group (e.g., messages need to be specifically adapted to users of children's services).

EFP should broaden its focus and investigate the possibility of sponsoring activities during the time the children are not in school. To better manage the high-risk of trafficking during school holidays, initiative could be taken to offer the children a school-and-work program during the summer holidays. Attention should also be given to the large number of at-risk and victim, out-of-school or unschooled children in the communities. Often, these children are already working with their parents. If they cannot be enrolled into primary schooling, alternative education methods should be sought, such as NFE.

- Avoid excessive service packages for victim or at-risk children

- Work with traffic flows, not only with departure zones

- Offer school-and-work programs for school holidays

- Provide a good offer of alternative schooling programs for out-of-school and unschooled children

Partnerships of international and local NGOs may lead to positive results, in terms of using each actor's comparative advantage, and strengthen skills within the different organizations. EFP is a good example of the positive outcome of such a partnership structure. In this project, the cooperation of the Catholic Church led to added advantages, because the church structures and church-related personnel were used for awareness-raising functions.

The work with APEs and other community organizations led to sustainable results. At the central level, the NGO working group had a stronger influence than the project could have had by itself.

- Use of multiple implementation agencies draws on the comparative advantages of each agency

- Work with APEs may lead to sustainable results for improved management of schools and reduced trafficking of children

- Creation of informal work groups to coordinate interventions and advocate for improved policies might produce better results than separate project-specific intervention strategies at the central level

It is also important to consider local norms and traditions when setting up a project. At the beginning of this document, two citations from a Fon village were given: "I didn't marry you for your beauty, but so that you can give me all the children you have in your belly;" and "If I eat sand, my children eat sand." Project strategies based on Western norms and traditions (e.g., generating lists for community-based monitoring of at-risk and victim children) may have very little relevance in an oral society, where it is seen as natural to send children away for work purposes to avoid that they and the family eat "sand." Instead, from the conception phase and onward, local stakeholders should be involved to help define activities that could be effective to reduce child trafficking.